

Improving Employee use of Agency finance and budget reporting tools

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I. Introduction and History

The Department of Administration (Admin) was created on July 1, 2015 as a result of the SC Restructuring Act of 2014. Much of Admin is made of divisions that came from the Budget and Control Board. In addition to those divisions, the Office of Executive Policies and Programs (OEPP) also became a part of Admin. Admin's Administrative Services was mostly comprised of employees that were part of the Budget and Control Board, as well as employees from OEPP. Part of OEPP has since been transferred to the Office of Attorney General. Also, more of OEPP will be transferred to the new Department of Children's Advocacy on July 1, 2019. However, Admin will be required to provide administrative support for the new agency, so the scope of this project will still be valid for those divisions. In addition to Admin's divisions, Admin provides administrative support to other agencies that are also former divisions of the Budget and Control Board, and these agencies are included in the scope of this project. For the purposes of this project, these agencies have been treated as divisions of Admin.

The budget division of Administration Services in Admin provides several reporting tools to certain employees of the Agency. These tools provide various finance and budget reports and data. While some of these tools were originally created for the budget and finance divisions, one of the main goals of providing these tools to other employees is to assist divisional leaders and finance liaisons with managing the division's budget, and there are probably other employees who can also find them useful as well. Some of these tools were specifically created for those divisional leaders and finance liaisons. Some of these employees may not have access to SCEIS, so these tools will provide the necessary data to them that they need without having to request this from someone in the finance or budget divisions. Even for those who do have access to SCEIS, these tools may help save them time by not having to download the data from SCEIS and

then organize it in the form they need it. Also, some of the data provided is related to payroll data, which most those employees do not have access to.

II. The Issue Investigated

During my time with Admin, I have long believed that employees may not have been utilizing these tools as effectively as they could be. There has been a lot of work that has gone into building these tools, so whoever can utilize them and save time should. The ongoing process to update the data in these tools is automated, so the ongoing time effort from the budget division is minimal, and the return on this time invested can be substantial if these tools are used effectively agency-wide.

Before getting into the details of these tools, I'd like to talk about our main budgeting tool, which we call our Operating Statements. The Operating Statement are reports the budget division creates for each division. These are very important at year end for the budget request process, but they are also updated throughout the year to help identify issues before they potentially become a big problem at the end of the year. Most are updated every other month during the year, but some are updated monthly. These are cash-based reports that help make projections, and the projections are what the divisional budgets are based on. There is a payroll projection feature that shows the employee and vacancy listing and allows projections for new employees, salary increases, and terminal leave. There is also historical operating expenditure data included to help make projections for those expenditures. At year end, these statements include data for the last two years, and setup projections for the next two years. During the year, the statements still include the last two years of data, plus year-to-date data, projections for the current year, and projections for the next year. These Operating Statements are the main basis on

which budget decisions are made. Many of the reports and data provided in the reporting tools are designed around the data that goes into these Operating Statements. Below are details of the four main tools that are provided.

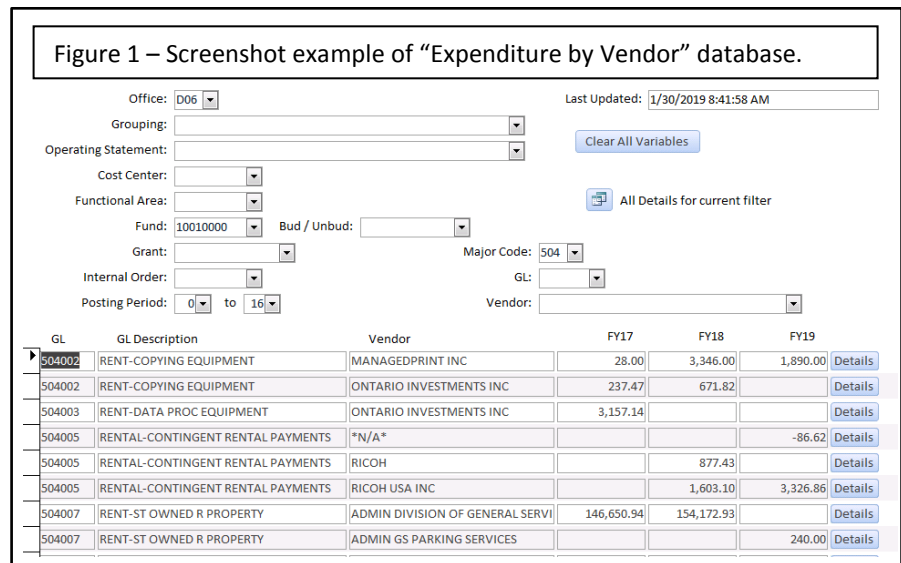
1. The “SCEIS Reporting” database

The “SCEIS Reporting” database contains a lot of finance and budget data. Among the reports available include budget, grant, expenditure, revenue, cash, open encumbrance, internal order, trial balance, and prior year to current year comparison reports. There are many different filters and grouping options available for these reports, and the data for the reports can be exported into Excel for further analysis. Much of this database was created for assisting the budget and finance divisions with daily tasks and updating the Operating Statements, but it is provided to others because it can provide them with useful reports and data. Not only does this database contain reports and data that tie into what goes into the Operating Statements, there are also reports that can help with day-to-day finance and budget tasks. Screenshots of the forms that show the reports that are available are available in Appendix I.

2. The “Expenditure by Vendor” database

This database provides a more detailed look at the expenditures of the agency. This database was also originally created for assisting the budget division, mostly for updating the Operating Statements, but the original version has some functionality that was removed for the version that is shared. This was made available to other employees because it can assist them with investigating expenditures that they may have questions about. Rather than having reports this database just shows a list, similar to data in an Excel file, of the total

expenditures summarized by the GL account and vendor name, which is the way that operating expenditure data is summarized in the Operating Statements. There are several filters that allow the user to filter down to the specific division, fund, cost center, etc. Figure 1 shows a screenshot of how this database looks. In that screenshot you can see a “Details” button on



each line, which when clicked the database will show the details that make up the total of that line, including the SCEIS document number and, if available, the purchase order number, which greatly makes it easier to investigate expenditures. The data in this database can also easily be copied to Excel if the user would like to.

3. Employee Listing Files

These are Excel files that list all employees and vacant positions for a division with the accounting coding for each employee as well as salary, employee ID, position ID, and some other information. There is a different file for each division, and the files are password protected so employees cannot see the files of other divisions. These files allow divisions to make sure their employees are being charged correctly, especially when new employees are added. Sometimes new employees are coded to the wrong division, and providing these files allow the divisional leaders to catch this before they are charged for an employee that does not work in their division. This list is the base for the payroll projections in the Operating

Statements, so if the divisional employees can catch errors by reviewing these files they can be corrected before the Operating Statements are updated.

4. Payroll Projections

These are reports that the budget division emails to division leaders and finance liaisons periodically. These reports just simply show year-to-date expenditures, a projection for the remainder of the year based on current employee listings, the current budget, and a budget vs. projection comparison. This is just a way to quickly see if the current budget is sufficient to cover projected salary expenditures for the fiscal year. The payroll projections in the Operating Statements are calculated similarly, but they allow for additional adjustments.

The access databases are the two biggest tools that are provided by the budget division, and as mentioned before were originally created for the budget and finance staff but are shared because they provide useful data to others. The databases are updated daily with data from SCEIS and along with the employee listings they are available on a shared network drive that only the budget division has write access, but others have read-only access. The employee listings and payroll projections have been developed specifically to provide this information to the divisional employees. These are generated by running Access macros, so there's not much involvement from budget staff when these are updated, and are typically updated once for each pay period, but at least once per month.

There are several reasons for which I believed employees may not have been utilizing these tools as effectively as they could be. First, I thought there could be some who just did not have access to the network drive that the databases and employee listings were located. Even for those who had access, there could be some who were just not aware that those were available to

them or did not know the password to their employee listing file. Much of this was setup originally under the Budget and Control Board, and OEPP was not associated with the Budget and Control Board and did not have access to this, so I was particularly worried that those issues may be especially true in OEPP divisions. Also, the “Expenditure by Vendor” database has been available for less than a year, so I was pretty sure that several employees were not aware that it was available. One thing I was very certain of was that some employees just did not know how to use the databases and need some training on how to use them. Also, I thought that it could be possible that the payroll projections weren’t being sent to everyone that they should be. Lastly, I wanted to see if there were any other reports or data that we could easily add to any of these tools that would be helpful to someone, but maybe they were hesitant to ask for it.

III. The Investigation

To test this, I decided to send a survey out to the divisional employees that should be using these tools. Depending on the division, this person could be the division director, or a finance liaison. I sent the survey to 15 divisions and received nine responses. The six divisions that did not respond are not divisions that I was concerned with. These six divisions are either small divisions with simple budgets and they probably don’t need to do a lot of ongoing financial or budget reporting, or I know that the finance liaisons use these tools and periodically ask questions about them. There were seven main areas that I asked questions about, the results of which are described below. A summary of the results is shown in Figure 2.

1. The first question I asked on my survey was if the person has access to the shared drive where the databases and employee listing files are located. While I was expecting more to say no, I only received one response that said they did not have access. I

expected there to be OEPP employees that did not have access, but unexpectedly this response came from a division that is not part of OEPP. This division has seen some changes recently, and their finance liaison is fairly new, so it seems that there was an issue with getting this person set up properly when they started. This has happened with other new employees as well, so there appears to be an issue here that needs to be investigated further. Fortunately, this was easy enough to fix. This person now has access to the share drive and knows the password to the employee listing file. I will also be training this person on how to use the databases.

2. I then asked who uses the “SCEIS Reporting” database. All the other eight respondents replied yes to that question, which is great. I was expecting to receive several responses that said they did not use the database. I also asked if there was any other data or reports that those employees would like included in this database. There was a total of three responses to that question. Unfortunately, one of these was a request that is not something that can be added easily, and I will need to do some further investigation into exactly what this person needs. The other two seem to be things that are currently available in the database, but those employees just need to be taught how to run those reports in the database. I plan to meet with these employees to provide some training (which is discussed later) so when I do I will make sure that to discuss these requests.

3. I also asked who uses the “Expenditure by Vendor” database. One of the main reasons why I wanted to pursue this project was because this database is relatively new, and I believed that not many people were aware that it was available, so this would be a good way to inform everyone that it is available. My suspicions were correct, in that four

of the eight respondents who had access to the share drive were not aware of this database, so hopefully this has prompted those employees to start using this database. I also asked if there was any other data those employees would like included in this database, but I did not receive any responses to this.

4. My next questions had to do with the employee listings files. I first asked if everyone had a file for their division. Only one of the eight respondents that had access to the share drive did not have an employee listing file for their division. I also asked if everyone knew the password to their employee listing file. An additional four respondents reported that they did not know the password to their employee listing file. I have made sure that the division that did not have an employee listing file now has one, and I have sent the password to this employee as well as the other four, so hopefully these divisions will be able to make use of their employee listing files now. Additionally, I asked if there was any other data that anyone would like included on the employee listing. There was one response to this, but unfortunately it is not something that can be easily added. I do see some validity in including this data in the employee listings, so I will explore how I can add this.

5. I then asked about the payroll projections files that are emailed. I usually get feedback after sending these emails, so I was pretty sure that these are reviewed by the recipients, so my main concern was if anyone did not receive them but wanted to. There was one respondent that responded this way, so they have been added to the list of who gets these reports.

6. Probably the biggest reason why I wanted to pursue this project was that I believed many people did not use the databases because they did not know how to use

them or what kind of reports they could get out of them. I asked in my survey who would like training. There was a total of seven respondents that asked for training, many of who also indicated in other areas of the survey that training may help them. I have started scheduling training sessions with these employees. I am hoping that this will lead to a substantial increase in the use of these databases once these employees see how easy it is to run reports and get data out of these databases. I will also explore with these employees if this training should be done on a recurring basis as they have more questions the more they use the databases. Hopefully this can also lead to more open communication between the budget division and these employees.

7. Finally, I asked if there was anything else that the budget division could help with. There was one response to this. The employee asked for some help with understanding how the Operating Statements are compiled. Many of the reports in the “SCEIS Reporting” database, and the main purpose for the “Expenditure by Vendor” database is to help assist the divisional leaders with understanding these Operating Statements and make the necessary projections. I plan to meet with this employee to show how the Operating Statements are compiled and tie reports in the databases to the Operating Statement. I’m actually really glad that this employee mentioned this, because it makes me realize that when I meet with the other employees who need training that I need to show them how the databases tie into their Operating Statements. While I’ve provided training on these databases before, it has usually been more focused on day-to-day activities, so now I need to be sure to provide training on both day-to-day activities and how to tie the reports to the Operating Statement.

IV. Conclusion

Overall, I believe this was a productive endeavor. Some of my beliefs were proven right, and some were shown to not be as big of an issue as I thought they may have been. Out of the nine responses that I received, there was only one that did not indicate that there was some help they needed from the

Figure 2 – Summary of survey results

Total respondents	9	
Did not have access to the shared drive	1	
Uses "SCEIS Reporting" database	8	
Requested additional data/reports in "SCEIS Reporting" database	3	*
Did not know about "Expenditure by Vendor" database	4	
Did not have an employee listing file	1	
Did not know password to employee listing file	4	
Requested additional data on employee listings	1	**
Wants to receive payroll projection files	1	
Would like training	7	
Wants info about how operating statements are compiled	1	
Did not need further help with these tools	1	

* 2 seem to be available already, just need to know how to run the report, other not easily added

** Not something easily added

budget division in relation to these reporting tools. Thankfully, most of the issues found, except for employees that need training, were relatively easy to fix. The main thing that needs to be focused on now is providing training to the divisions that need it. Going forward with the training I hope that it can lead to having better communication between these divisions and the budget division. I certainly believe that what has been accomplished so far has improved how these divisions are able to use these reporting tools, and it should only get better as those employees learn more about how to use the databases. One other thing that needs to be explored is how to ensure that newly hired finance liaisons have access to the share drive and are trained on how to use the databases.

To evaluate how successful my efforts have been, I plan to survey these employees again. By the time I finish my training efforts, we will likely be near the end of the current fiscal year, so I believe the best time to do this will be next fall once we are settled in to the new fiscal year. This should give plenty of time for these employees to become comfortable with these tools and

develop more questions or requests. From there it may be beneficial to make this an annual occurrence to keep these employees engaged and updated with the reporting tools.

There will certainly always be an ongoing effort to help the divisional leaders in understanding the Operating Statements so that they can make the best projections possible. Hopefully if the budget division can continue to ensure that they are able to use these four reporting tools in the most effective way they will be able to make better projections leading to better budget decisions.

Appendix I – screenshots of “SCEIS Reporting” database reporting forms



Main reporting form:



8:34:47 AM



Database last updated: 1/29/2019



Report Type



- ☒ Department
- ☐ Org Chart
- ☐ AGY Funded Prog
- ☐ State Funded Prog
- ☐ Fund
- ☐ Grant
- ☐ All - Excel Export



  Budget Vs Actual



  Cash By Period



  Expense By Period



  Revenue By Period



  Transfers By Period



  Cash Status



  FM - Exp CY-PY Comparison

  FM - Exp CY-PY Comparison By Vendor

  Revenue CY-PY Comparison

  FM - Exp by Vendor

  Pcard History

  Cash Revenue By Period

Variables

Dept:

GL Type:

Cost Center:

GL Accounts:

Functional Area:

Grant:

Org Chart:

State Funded Program:

Fund:

Fund Group:

Bud Ind:

Vendor:

Period: 00 to 16

Clear All Variables

Extra Pcard Variables

Cardholder Name:

Mgr Signoff:



Fiscal Year: 2019

Statement Date:



SCEIS Doc#:



Vendor Name:



Trial Balance:



 



Other Budget Reports:



  Budget V. Actual - Appropriations Act (Budgeted Funds Only)


  Budget V. Actual - Negatives


  Budget V. Actual Percentage of Budget Remaining

  Budgeted Funds/Filled FTEs by Org Unit



  Open Encumbrances (no vendor filter)



  Open Encumbrances w/ Line Numbers (no vendor filter)

 Open Encumbrances by SFP



 Open Encumbrances by WBS


Minority Business Expenditures:



  Minority Business Expenses by Dept/Org Unit



  Minority Business Quarterly Report

Operating Statement:



  Operating Statement



 Operating Statement by AFP



  Operating Statement CY-PY Comparison

  Operating Statement By Fund



Masterdata Reference Tables:



  Org Chart


  GL Accounts

  Doc Types

New GL Account Info:

  Real Estate GLs

  IT GLs

 New IT GL Account Table (PDF)

Internal Order Form

Grants Reporting Form

Internal Order reporting form:

Budget vs Actual Reports		Variables	
	Internal Order Totals	Department:	<input type="text"/>
	By Fund - AFP	Grouping:	<input type="text"/>
	By Grant - AFP	Cost Center:	<input type="text"/>
		Functional Area:	<input type="text"/>
		Fund:	<input type="text"/>
		Internal Order:	<input type="text"/>
		Vendor Name:	<input type="text"/>
		Period:	<input type="text" value="00"/> to <input type="text" value="16"/>
		Clear All	
		Close Internal Order Form	

Exp by Vendor Reports		Variables	
	Internal Order Totals	Group:	<input type="text"/>
	By Fund - AFP	Subgroup:	<input type="text"/>
	By Grant - AFP	Internal Order:	<input type="text"/>
		Cost Center:	<input type="text"/>
		Functional Area:	<input type="text"/>
		Fund:	<input type="text"/>
		Clear All	

Open Encumbrances by Internal Order Groups		Variables	
		Group:	<input type="text"/>
		Subgroup:	<input type="text"/>
		Internal Order:	<input type="text"/>
		Cost Center:	<input type="text"/>
		Functional Area:	<input type="text"/>
		Fund:	<input type="text"/>
		Clear All	

Grants reporting form:

Grants missing from Grant Master Table	Office: <input type="text"/>
Unstarted Grants	Grants Expiring within 60 Days

Active Grants Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Grant Award vs Expenditures (Does not show cost-sharing funds)
Clear all variables	Grant Budget vs Expenditure/Commitments:
Office: <input type="text"/>	by State Funded Program
Fund: <input type="text"/>	Subgrants: by State Funded Program
Grant: <input type="text"/>	by Funds Center/Functional Area
CFDA: <input type="text"/>	by Sponsored Program & Class

Expenditure Details:	
FY: <input type="text"/>	Detail Level
Funds Center: <input type="text"/>	Major MAMI GLA
Functional Area: <input type="text"/>	By Agency Funded Program
Agency Funded Program: <input type="text"/>	By State Funded Program
State Funded Program: <input type="text"/>	
Major: <input type="text"/>	
MAMI: <input type="text"/>	
GL Account: <input type="text"/>	